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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) → The Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility (NCTR) has developed the experimental Mod II Firefighters' Aluminized Crash-Rescue Fire-Proximity Hood, which improves upon the standard firefighters' aluminized hood (MIL-H-29144). Reports from the firefighting community have indicated that the standard hood is not compatible with the current self-contained breathing apparatus. To allow for the self-contained breathing apparatus, a new aluminum frame with a greater front radius has been developed, and a liftup visor with an enlarged area for improved vision and voice communications has been incorporated in the experimental hood.			

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This visor also reduces fogging of the face shield. Also, a bib is attached to the front to serve as a protective flap over the vacuum-deposited gold-coated facepiece when the hood is not being worn. ~~(U)~~

NCTR has conducted a limited service evaluation of the experimental Mod II hood. As a result of this evaluation, NCTR recommends that a new latch system be developed for securing the visor. After completion of this development, another service evaluation of the experimental fire-proximity hood should be conducted. ~~(S)~~

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THE EXPERIMENTAL MOD II FIREFIGHTERS' ALUMINIZED CRASH-RESCUE
FIRE-PROXIMITY HOOD: AN INTERIM REPORT OF A
LIMITED SERVICE TEST

INTRODUCTION

The Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility (NCTR) has developed the experimental Mod II Firefighters' Aluminized Crash-Rescue Fire-Proximity Hood with liftup visor, which is designed to fit comfortably over the standard, self-contained, breathing apparatus. The standard firefighters' aluminized hood (MIL-H-29144), on the other hand, is not compatible with current breathing devices. If a breathing apparatus were required, the hood would now be discarded, leaving the firefighter's head unprotected from heat. Other deficiencies reported are: poor peripheral vision; severely restricted voice communication while in the standby mode; fogging of the facepiece; easily damaged, vacuum-deposited, gold-coated facepiece.

To allow for the current breathing apparatus, the Mod II hood has been designed with a greater front radius. An enlarged liftup facepiece also is incorporated to increase the peripheral vision, improve upon restricted voice communications while in a standby mode, and decrease fogging of the face shield. The detachable, plastic, protective cover for the vacuum-deposited, gold-coated facepiece has been replaced by a permanent aluminized bib, which protects the facepiece when the hood is not in use.

NCTR service evaluated the experimental Mod II hood and discovered that the latches that secure the liftup facepiece broke on all hoods. NCTR recommends that a new latch be developed and an additional service evaluation be conducted before adoption of the experimental Mod II fire-proximity hood. Except for this latch deficiency, the Mod II hood was highly preferred over the standard aluminized fire-proximity hood. This report presents the results of the limited service test comparing the experimental hood with the standard one.

INITIAL INVESTIGATION

An initial survey of the tri-service firefighting community confirmed that the standard aluminized fire-proximity hood was incompatible with the standard, self-contained, breathing apparatus. Also, a number of other deficiencies were reported, such as poor peripheral vision, fogging of the facepiece, the vacuum-deposited, gold-coated facepiece was easily damaged, and severely restricted voice communication while in the standby mode.

Investigation into commercial aluminized firefighters' proximity hoods indicated that there was not a commercial hood that would satisfy NCTR's requirements. Areas that were deficient in the commercial hoods were:

- a. the front radius, which was not great enough to encompass breathing apparatus and to permit unrestricted voice communication;
- b. the liftup face shields, which were not airtight (no gasket between face shield and hood); and,

c. the gold-coated shields on some models, which could be replaced only at the factory.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD FIRE-PROXIMITY HOOD

The standard fire-proximity hood consists of a one-piece molded frame made of a fibrous-glass-reinforced polyester resin (see Figure 1). A bump-cap-style helmet is attached to the frame by means of a swivel-type spring-loaded-plunger attachment. The frame-and-helmet assembly is covered by a hood composed of a highly reflective aluminized outer shell. The outer shell is joined to a quilt-lined inner shell, which provides thermal insulation. The hood has a channeled face opening, which permits easy insertion and removal of the facepiece support and the metallized facepiece. The metallized facepiece is a gold-coated polyester-type plastic film; the inserts are held securely in position by two flaps, one at each end of the face opening. Also held in place by the flaps is a protective facepiece cover, which is removed when the hood is in use.

DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMENTAL MOD I HOOD

NCTR contracted with I.L.C. Dover to design a new fire-proximity hood that would be compatible with the standard, self-contained, breathing apparatus and eliminate the other deficiencies associated with the standard hood. An experimental Mod I hood was designed with an aluminum frame, which had an increased radius to allow for the self-contained breathing apparatus. A liftup visor was also incorporated into this experimental hood. This visor consisted of: a three-piece aluminum frame; two side pieces, which incorporated the pivot points for rotating the visor assembly open and the visor handles to allow for easy opening without contact with the outer gold surface; and one bottom framepiece, which provides rigidity and acts as the pad for the visor clamp to push against.

Silicone was selected as the seal material because of its resistance to heat and chemicals, both of which are encountered during operations. A "P" configuration seal was chosen, because it is a standard compression-seal configuration available from a number of suppliers, and it presents a wide sealing surface during usage. Two small toggle clamps, which secure the visor in the closed position, provide a positive pressure against the front section of the bottom aluminum frame of the visor.

For protection of the gold-coated facepiece, an attached aluminized bib was added to the front of the hood. When not in use, the bib can be extended over the visor to prevent the gold surface from becoming marred. A bump cap was secured to the inner visor frame by means of universal mounts to ensure that the bump cap tracks the visor frame. The universal mounts allow for quick removal of the cap, if required. A handle, attached to the top of the hood for ease of carrying and for hanging during storage, helps to eliminate unnecessary damage to the hood's fragile materials.



Figure 1. Standard Firefighters' Aluminized Crash-Rescue Fire-Proximity Hood.

EVALUATION OF MOD I HOOD

In-house evaluation of the Mod I fire-proximity hood demonstrated all currently used, self-contained, breathing apparatus could be worn comfortably under the hood. Because of the amount of curvature in the front facepiece, an inadequate seal was found at the bottom corners of the facepiece. NCTR determined that the clamps would have to be moved to the back corners in order to apply both backward and sideward pressure. The movement of the clamps then allowed for the removal of the aluminum frame piece at the bottom of the visor. Also, I.L.C. Dover decided that, to reduce cost, the side frame and handles for the visor would be one piece instead of two. Because the handle on the top was determined to be hazardous in an operational mode, it was to be removed.

I.L.C. Dover was then awarded a contract to produce 30 additional hoods with the above modifications, which became the experimental Mod II hood that has been field tested against the standard hood.

DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMENTAL MOD II HOOD

The experimental Mod II Firefighters' Aluminized Crash-Rescue Fire-Proximity Hood (see Figure 2) consists of an inner and an outer aluminum frame support, which allow the aluminized outer shell fabric and quilted liner to be sandwiched between them. This sandwiching effect is secured by rivets. The top left and right corners of the frame are pivot points for the liftup visor. The visor is composed of a facepiece support and metallized facepiece held together by aluminum supporting pieces on the sides. A "P" configurated silicone seal is placed on the outer surface of the aluminum frame to prevent smoke from entering between the liftup visor and frame. An aluminized protective bib has been stitched onto the bottom front side of the aluminized hood. When the hood is not in use, the bib extends over the facepiece, preventing it from becoming marred. When in use, the bib is snapped to the lower section of the hood, out of the way of the firefighter. The basic cover was enlarged by 3 inches to improve its drape over the wearer's shoulder. The outer shell fabric was also changed from an aluminized asbestos/aramid blend to an aluminized heat-treated polyacrylonitrile fabric. Spring-loaded clamps are attached to the bottom left and right corners of the frame to hold the visor securely to the frame in an operational mode. The Mod II hood has a similar bump cap attached to the inside of the frame as does the standard firefighters' hood.

FIELD TEST PROCEDURE

A total of 25 hoods were evaluated at five locations, five hoods at each location. The test sites were: McDill Air Force Base, FL; Carswell Air Force Base, TX; Marine Corps and Air Station Cherry Point, NC; Oceana Naval Air Station, VA; and Miramar Naval Air Station, CA. The Mod II hood was service evaluated for a 3-month period during actual crash rescue and practice sessions. At the end of the test period, the hoods were inspected at McDill, Cherry Point, and Oceana, the test subjects were debriefed, and the questionnaires completed at all test sites. (Appendix A contains a sample questionnaire.)

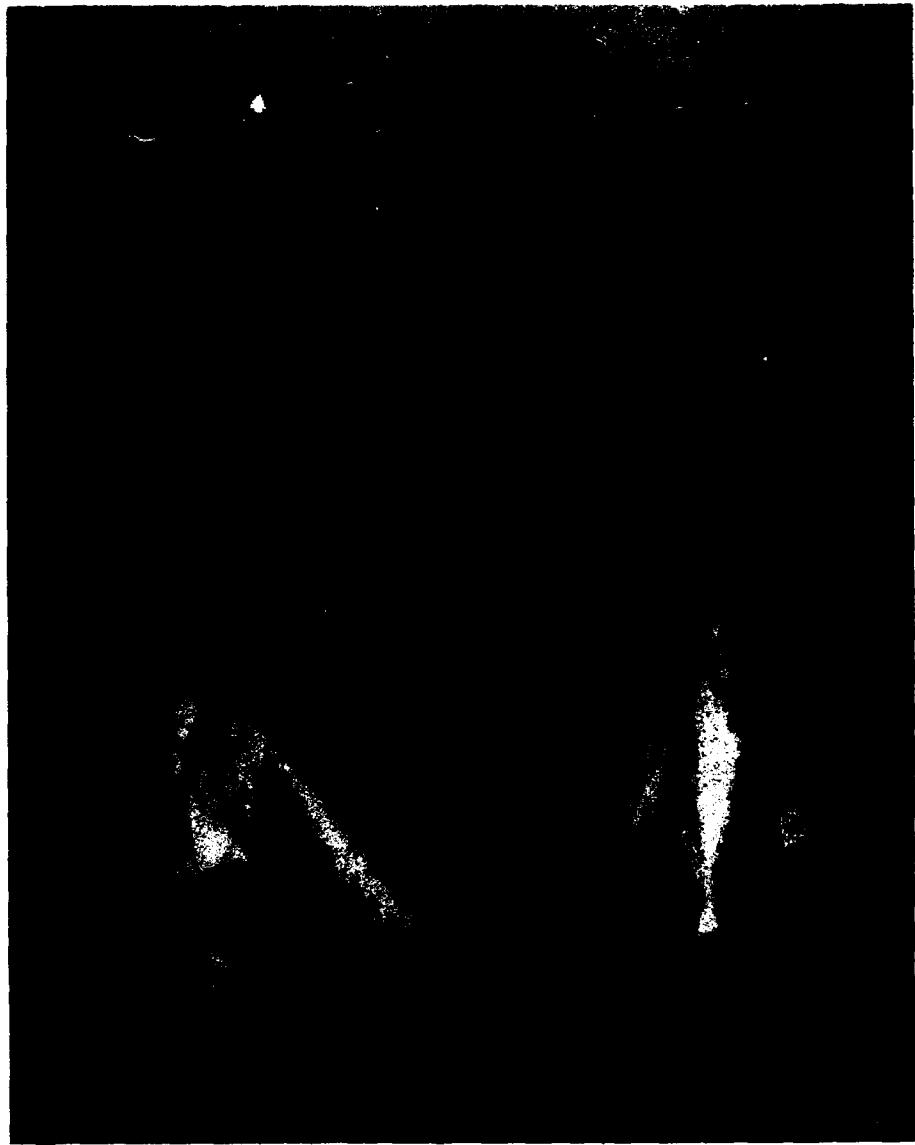


Figure 2. Mod II Firefighters' Aluminized Crash-Rescue Fire-Proximity Hood With the Visor Raised.

RESULTS

The hoods were worn between one and forty-three times and only seven of the test subjects wore breathing apparatus with the hoods. Those personnel using the breathing apparatus determined that the fit was either excellent or good. None of the participants experienced smoke or excessive heat entering from the edges of the visor. Therefore, the seal created by the silicone gasket and the liftup visor adequately accomplished its purpose.

Eighty-seven percent of the personnel preferred the swing-out visor to the nonmovable visor because of better visibility, easier communication in a standby mode, and less fogging of the face shield. Test subjects determined that maneuverability and vision quality with the Mod II hood were equal to or better than those characteristics with the standard hood--97% and 96%, respectively.

Problems arose with the chinstrap being too short and the springs on the latches broke almost immediately after use. Most participants said resnapping the bib was difficult and they would prefer the bib to hang down.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

In a limited wear test, the experimental Mod II Firefighters' Aluminized Crash-Rescue Fire-Proximity Hood was found to be superior overall to the standard-issue hood (MIL-H-29144). During the service evaluation, it was determined that the latch system was defective and should be redesigned. After the latch system is redesigned, a service evaluation of 100 or more Mod II hoods should be conducted.

APPENDIX A

Information Sheet & Questionnaire for Service Evaluation



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NAVY CLOTHING AND TEXTILE RESEARCH FACILITY
21 STRATHMORE ROAD
NATICK, MASSACHUSETTS 01760

IN REPLY REFER TO:
31:HW:pd
523-003-58

General Information for Test Subjects, Concerning Evaluation
of Experimental Hood, Firemen's, Aluminized Proximity

The Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility (NCTR), Natick, MA, has completed development of a new style of firemen's aluminized fire-proximity hood and is asking you to "wear test" these hoods under "actual-use" conditions. After results are obtained from this evaluation, modifications will be made to this hood, if required, and then proposed for adoption to replace the current standard handwear.

The main differences between the standard hood and the experimental hood are that the experimental hood enables the wearer to swing out the visor when he is in a standby condition, increases peripheral vision, and permits the ease of use of all types of breathing apparatus under the hood. The thermal qualities of these hoods are comparable to the standard headwear and are suitable for wear under the same conditions as the standard.

In this evaluation you are being asked to wear the hood, as needed, during performance of duties and to record your observations, on a daily basis, until the evaluation is terminated. At the end of the evaluation, you are to complete the attached questionnaire and forward it to NCTR. Important factors to observe include fit, comfort, ability to perform duties, problems that occur due to the new swing-out visor, the use of breathing apparatus with the new-style hood, and any other factors you may consider to be important. In this connection, the new style should be compared to the standard.

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If you have any opinions as to how this headwear can be improved,
kindly offer your comments and suggestions.

After 4 months of wear, if the hoods are still usable, it is not
necessary to return these hoods; however, if they cannot be used, it is
important for us to see the defective hoods.

The information gained from this evaluation will greatly assist this
Facility in developing the best possible protective headwear for use by
firefighting personnel.

Your cooperation in taking part in this wear test evaluation is
greatly appreciated.

QUESTIONNAIRE

EVALUATION OF FIREFIGHTERS' HOOD

NAME AND RATE _____

STATION _____

NUMBER OF TIMES WORN _____

WAS BREATHING APPARATUS WORN? YES ____ NO ____

IF YES, TYPE _____

1. How was the fit and comfort of the experimental hood compared to the standard issue hood?

Better than _____ Equal to _____ Worse than _____

2a) How would you rate the feature of the "swing out" visor compared to the non-movable visor?

Better than _____ Equal to _____ Worse than _____

2b) If better than or worse than, how or why? _____

3. While fighting fires, did you experience any smoke entering the hood from around the visor?

Yes ____ No ____

4. Did you experience flames or excessive heat entering the hood from around the edges of the visor?

Yes ____ No ____

5. How was your ability to maneuver with the experimental hood compared to the standard issue hood?

Better than _____ Equal to _____ Worse than _____

6. Compare the vision quality of the experimental visor with the standard issue visor:

Better than _____ Equal to _____ Worse than _____

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7. If breathing apparatus was used, how was the fit?

Excellent _____ Good _____ Poor _____

8. In the space below please list any other comments that you have on
the experimental hood:

9. Completed questionnaires should be returned to:

Officer in Charge

Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility

(Code 31)(Mr. H. Winer)

21 Strathmore Road

Natick, Massachusetts 01760